

Message Text

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E.M QQYTWC GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ET, US

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REGARDING HAILE SELASSIE AND PRISONERS
IN DETENTION

REFS: (A) STATE 261628

(B) STATE 262137

(C) STATE 262239

1. SUMMARY. IN A CORDIAL MEETING THIS MORNING WITH
ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER ARAYA, I MADE VIGOROUS REPRESENTA-
TIONS REGARDING THE FATE OF HAILE SELASSIE AND THE
REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS. I ASKED FOR FIRM ASSURANCES
FROM THE DIRG ON THESE ISSUES AND WARNED THAT THE FUTURE
OF AMERICAN AID PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA IS IN
GRAVE DANGER AT PRESENT. ARAYA CITED INDICATIONS
THAT THE LIVES OF THE EMPEROR AND THE PRISONERS ARE NOT
IN DANGER AT PRESENT BUT PROMISED TO SEEK APPROPRIATE
ASSURANCES FROM THE DIRG. I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT
THE DIRG HAS ALREADY CONCLUDED IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO
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PROCEED WITH FURTHER EXECUTIONS AT PRESENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AT A MEETING WITH ACTING FONMIN ARAYA MORNING OF NOVEMBER 28 I MADE AN ORAL STATEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTEL (A) REGARDING THE FATE OF HAILE SELASSIE AND LEFT A COPY THEREOF. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTEL (C) I ALSO DELIVERED A COPY OF THE TELEGRAM FROM 33 SENATORS ON THE SUBJECT. IN CONCLUSION I STATED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARA 5 REFTEL (B), THAT THE USG WOULD WELCOME CATEGORIC ASSURANCES THAT NO FORTHER EXECUTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE, AND THAT HAILE SELASSIE'S LIFE WILL BE SPARED. I ADDED THAT IN ITS JUDGMENT WORLD OPINION WOULD BE SATISFIED WITH NOTHING LESS.

3. WITH REGARD TO HAILE SELASSIE, ARAYA POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD ASSURED US YESTERDAY THAT THE REPORT REGARDING HIS REMOVAL FROM ADDIS AND IMPENDING EXECUTION WAS TOTALLY INCORRECT. HE OBSERVED THAT A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT TO THIS EFFECT HAS SINCE BEEN MADE ON THE RADIO AND IN THE PRESS. MOREOVER, IT WAS HIS PERSONAL OPINION ON THE BASIS OF CONVERATIONS WITH THE DIRG THAT THE DIRG HAS NO INTENTION OF EXECUTING THE EMPEROR. HE SAID THAT THE DIRG IN FACT IS CONSIDERING PERMITTING IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS TO SEE HAILE SELASSIE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WITH REGARD TO THE REMAINING PRISONERS, HE HAD BEEN VERY PLEASED TO LEARN THAT DIRG MEMBERS ASSURED ASSEMBLED FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE DETAINEES WHEN THEY BROUGHT FOOD TO MENELIK PALACE AT NOON ON NOVEMBER 27 THAT NONE OF THE REMAINING DETAINEES WILL BE EXECUTED.

4. I REPLIED THAT THE STATEMENTS TO WHICH HE REFERRED WERE GRATIFYING TO ME AND WOULD BE TO MY GOVERNMENT, BUT THAT THE ASSURANCES MY GOVERNMENT DESIRED TO RECEIVE WOULD NEED TO GO FURTHER. THEY WOULD HOPEFULLY RELATE TO THE FUTURE, RATHER THAN JUST THE PRESENT AND THE IMMEDIATE FUTRE, AND WOULD TAKE THE FORM OF OFFICIAL STATEMENTS FROM THE FIRG TO MY GOVERNMENT. ARAYA ASSURED ME THAT HE UNDERSTOOD.

5. AFTER EMPHASIZING THAT I HAD THUS FAR BEEN SPEAKING ON THE BASIS OF URGENT INSTRUCTIONS FROM MY GOVERNMENT, CONFIDENTIAL

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I SAID THAT I WISHED TO RAISE TWO FURTHER POINTS ON MY PERSONAL INITIATIVE. FIRSTLY, I WONDERED IF THE VERY ADVERSE WORLDWIDE REACTIONS TO THE SATURDAY NIGHT MASSACRE WERE BEING REPORTED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, INCLUDING FOR EXAMPLE THE SEVERE PRESS CRITICISM EMANATING FROM TANZANIA, ZAMBIA, SUDAN, AND NIGERIA. ARAYA INDICATED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THESE REACTIONS AND HE MENTIONED THE SHARP CRITICISM ON THIS SUBJECT

IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BY THE TANZANIAN AMBASSADOR
ON BEHALF OF AFRICAN STATES.

6. SECONDLY, I EXPRESSED TO ARAYA MY GREAT PERSONAL CONCERN REGARDING THE IMPACT OF SATURDAY NIGHT'S EVENTS ON THE FUTURE OF US AID PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA. I DESCRIBED AT SOME LENGTH THE MANNER IN WHICH PRESS REPRESENTATIVES HAD PRESSED THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN AT THE NOON BRIEFING ON NOVEMBER 27 FOR ASSURANCES THAT AID TO ETHIOPIA HAD BEEN SHUT OFF. I POINTED OUT THAT A GREAT DEAL OF SENTIMENT HAS DEVELOPED BOTH IN CONGRESS AND IN THE AMERICAN PRESS FOR A CUTOFF OF US AID. IT WAS PLAIN TO ME THAT SUFFICIENT POLITICAL PRESSURE WAS BEING GENERATED TO ENDANGER THE FUTURE OF US AID PROGRAMS TO ETHIOPIA. THIS CAUSED ME GREAT CONCERN, AS I WAS MUCH INTERESTED FOR THE SAKE OF AMERICAN-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS IN A CONTINUATION OF THIS AID. I HOPED ARAYA WOULD CONVEY TO THE DIRG THE SERIOUS DANGER INVOLVED IN THIS SITUATION, AS WELL AS MY BELIEF THAT ASSURANCES OF THE TYPE I HAD MENTIONED EARLIER MIGHT HELP TO MITIGATE THE PROBLEM.

7. ARAYA APPEARED FULLY SYMPATHETIC WITH MY ARGUMENTATION BUT COMMENTED THAT THE DIRG COULD HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO "GUARANTEE" THAT THERE WOULD "NEVER" BE ANY SUBSEQUENT EXECUTIONS IN ETHIOPIA. I REPLIED THAT THE MORE FAR-REACHING AND FIRM THE ASSURANCES COULD BE, THE BETTER THE EFFECT WOULD BE ON THE US GOVERNMENT. IT SHOULD NOT BE IMPOSSIBLE, IT SEEMED TO ME, FOR THE DIRG TO ASSURE THE US GOVERNMENT THAT IT HAS NO INTENTION WHATSOEVER OF EXECUTING HAILE SELASSIE AND THAT IT FIRMLY INTENDS TO PROVIDE FAIR

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AND OPEN TRIALS UNDER PROPER JUDICIAL PROCEDURES FOR ALL THE REMAINING PRISONERS.

8. ARAYA SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE SERIOUSNESS OF MY MESSAGE AND WOULD PROMPTLY CONVEY IT TO THE DIRG.

9. COMMENT. I AM CONFIDENT THAT ARAYA IS FULLY IN SYMPATHY WITH THE VIEWS I EXPRESSED AND THAT HE WILL DO HIS BEST WITH THE DIRG, ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT A FORCEFUL SPOKESMAN. THE REACTION OF THE DIRG ITSELF IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT. HOWEVER, THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE EMPEROR, THE PROMISE OF NOVEMBER 27 TO THE FAMILIES OF THE PRISONERS, AND ARAYA'S OWN ESTIMATE REGARDING THE DIRG'S INTENTIONS CERTAINLY PROVIDE REASON TO HOPE THAT THE WORLDWIDE

REVULSION AGAINST THE EXECUTIONS HAS ALREADY CONVINCED
THE DIRG THAT IT MUST DESIST FROM FURTHER ACTION OF
THIS KIND.
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